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Der Briefwechsel des Paulinus von Nola: Kommunikation und soziale Kontakte zwischen christlichen Intellektuellen (review)

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Augustine and his culture by scholars of early Christianity are politely cordoned off or mildly disparaged.

The breadth of this *Companion's* prior understandings must partly account for the consistency of its results. It may also help explain the paucity of real surprises sprung by its pages despite the seeming boldness of the editors' initial premise. Granted, it is hard to model exegetical surprise; like the tourist's guide, the reader's companion has always been there before. Yet it is possible to imagine a work devised on similar principles to this one, even if not as pleasing in its final coherence, whose contributors, for the sake of future readers of the *Confessions*, including themselves, would be less willing to grant all Augustine's key postulates, the transparency of his key terms, the existential centrality of his problems, and the cogency of his solutions—less ready, in short, to leave this author so many of the keys to a text that was never wholly in his keeping and that is no longer his property except in the most blandly literary-historical sense. *Gaudeat lector*, then, with this new *Reader's Companion* in hand. But, more than ever, *cave hominem unius libri*.

Mark Vessey, *University of British Columbia*

Sigrid Mratschek

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Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002

Pp. xiv + 732. €99.

When Gennadius of Marseilles decided to complete Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus* toward the end of the fifth century, he was compelled to include Paulinus of Nola (d. 431) because this bishop, theologian, poet, and husband "was distinguished, not only for erudition and holiness of life, but also for his ability to cast out demons" (ch. 49). Paulinus is a pivotal figure who straddled the many worlds of late antiquity: a married man who made a mutual vow of continence with his wife, a gifted bard who left the ribaldry of Ausonius for the Christian poetry of Prudentius, one who was governor of Campania but called to be Bishop of Nola. He was a leading intellectual, a Churchman, and, as Gennadius reports, one who never shrunk from a fight. Despite his influence and importance in the fifth century, however, Paulinus has hitherto remained a relatively obscure figure, having been overshadowed by greater interest in his contemporaries, Jerome and Augustine.

This volume seeks to show the unique significance of Paulinus' life and work. Divided into four main parts, Mratschek first (19–182) focuses on the world which Paulinus inhabited, i.e., exactly what it meant to be regarded as "learned," what the life of a senator entailed, and the role of the wider family in understanding Paulinus, especially his relations with the Anicii. With such connections usually came tremendous wealth (*Ahnenreihe und Reichtum*, 78), and it is obvious that Paulinus enjoyed the finest which the late Mediterranean

world had to offer. This is why the latter part of this section shows exactly what his *conversio*—or what some would call a *perversio*—meant not only for him and his family but for those around him. Paulinus' newly-embraced asceticism hence challenged those with whom he climbed the *cursus honorum*. His example as well as his pen reminded the aristocracy that they may own much in the eyes of this world but their true citizenship was in no way to be found here.

The second section (185–394) examines the cultural and religious circle in which Paulinus found himself. Mratschek begins with a very detailed description of the topography and *Lokalisierung* of fifth century Spain and Italy and then goes on to analyze particular letters and speeches. Included here is, of course, a lay-out of St. Felix's tomb which originally drew Paulinus and Theresia to Nola; here too is an attempt to reconstruct what it meant to a town like Nola when someone with Paulinus' stature not only took up residence but developed it into a major place of pilgrimage. Mratschek makes the point that Nola and the literary output of Paulinus are, in fact, related, letters being the only way to stay in contact with the greater centers of the empire. Therefore, as her title promises, Paulinus' vast exchange of letters is taken up next (397–485); but as the title fails to indicate, we come to see how Paulinus busied himself with all levels of Roman society, from the *Landbevölkerung* to the *stadtrömischen Hochadels* (398). Within this discussion come three very illuminating themes: the use of gifts as a sign of friendship and fidelity (427–43), the role of the book among the *literati* (443–53), and the publication of literary materials (especially letters) as an act of divine praise (454–85).

The fourth and final section (489–602) is entitled *Kontaktpflege* and is thus a look at the importance of cultivating the proper relationships. Special attention is paid to the illustrious guests Paulinus entertained in Nola as well as to the way in which his monastic lifestyle affected his interaction among the empire's *clarissimi*. Following these four sections come 100 pages of appendices providing selections of those letters which have to do with Paulinus' conversion and subsequent renunciation of temporal goods, his social teaching and charitable program, a list and brief biography of those with whom he carried on correspondence, and a time line of his life.

In the obituary he composed on Paulinus' death, Uranius remembered him as *suavis et blandus in litteris, dulcis et bene suavis in versibus* (PL 53.864). This volume is a testimony to the Bishop of Nola's ability to direct, comfort, challenge and edify through the written missive. Mratschek's work here is a very accurate and specialized account. As would be expected, most of the secondary work is in German; however, the author is quite aware of the more recent English works treating Paulinus: the very helpful work of Joseph Lienhard, S.J. ("*der beste Kenner von Paulinus' Konversion und seinem religiösen Selbstverständnis*" 185), Dennis Trout's *Paulinus of Nola* (University of California, 1999), and Catherine Conybeare's *Paulinus Noster* (Oxford, 2000). This volume is a highly recommended treatment of the life of Paulinus of Nola and the world of late antiquity in which he played such a crucial role.

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